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News Release

Teens Honored for Efforts to Prevent Dating Violence

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) recognized several Utah teens for their efforts to bring attention to dating violence during a ceremony at the State Capitol building. The students participated in an art contest as part of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week held February 1-6, 2010.

Caity Swanagan, a survivor of a violent relationship, urged attendees to take dating violence seriously. “Please realize that these things do happen. You may think to yourself ‘Oh, that it will never be me,’ but then suddenly you find yourself in a bad relationship and a scary situation.”

While many people think of dating violence as physical abuse, it includes verbal and emotional abuse as well.

Data from the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a national survey conducted every two years in public high schools throughout Utah, show that 10.9% of 9th-12th graders said they were hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend. A higher percentage of male students (12.5%) reported they had been in a violent dating relationship compared to female students (8.9%).

Wyatt Brown, one of 46 students from across the state who entered the contest, drew inspiration for his entry from watching friends who had been in abusive relationships. “I’ve seen first hand what damage a violent relationship can do to a person and the people around them. When I heard about the contest, I wanted to make an inspiring video in the hope that it would put a stop to teen dating violence.”

- MORE -

Page 2 of 2 – Teens Awarded for Efforts to Prevent Dating Violence

The contest invited 7th-12th grade students from across Utah to create a visual art project, YouTube video, or written work that educates teens about dating violence. Grand prize winners were:

- Megan Glasmann, Treasure Mountain International School, Park City, Visual Arts Category
- Riley Hulick, Pleasant Grove High School, YouTube Video Category
- Karsyn Robb, Treasure Mountain International School, Park City, Written Works Category

Each winner received a plaque and a visual arts, film production, or writing class valued at \$190-\$300 from the Visual Arts Institute, Spy Hop Productions, and Higher Ground Learning Center.

In addition, Wade Moon, a sophomore at Southern Utah University, received an award for his work to prevent dating violence among youth of the Cedar Band of Paiutes. Prevent Child Abuse Utah was also recognized for educating more than 4,000 high school students and faculty members about healthy dating relationships.

The winning entries can be viewed at

<http://health.utah.gov/vipp/dating%20violence/awarenessweek.html>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.